

from Washington. And I know it's burdening some of your State capitols, too. In that area, business-as-usual, I'm talking about these unfunded mandates.

Every time I meet with the Governors or legislators, they say, "Please help us keep Congress from inflicting mandates on us. Give us the flexibility. We might have a better answer in Mobile than they do in Moline, so let us try it our way." And I understand what happens when an unfunded mandate drops in on you from Washington. You've got to find the money if you want to participate in it to pay for somebody else's wish list, either by cutting out programs that you have on the books that you feel might be better or raising taxes at the local level. In other words, Washington takes the credit, and you end up taking the heat.

And this message has been drilled home to me over and over again. And I think these mandates are irresponsible, and they cut right to the heart of the Federal system. So I've told the Congress if they pass a mandate, they just simply cannot pass the buck. They've got to pay for it without a tax increase.

Then there's one other front in our fight to restore federalism. More than a year ago—and I know you all have been helpful working with us on this, and we're very grateful—we proposed a \$15 billion block grant for the States because I believe that States are the laboratories of democracy. And you need and your constituents need the flexibility and the freedom to experiment, the freedom and flexibility that this grant would permit.

And the conference has been invaluable,

in helping get this proposal in shape. We introduced it last year, but we're going to be introducing to Congress soon, again. And I call on them to give it swift consideration.

The key, we all know this, is working together: Republicans and Democrats, the Federal and State governments, the legislative and executive branches. And I would be the first to confess that I understand the pressures of an election year. But we know what we can do in those moments when we can set partisanship aside. And I think that's what the American people are calling out for right now. And we must not let them down.

So, again, my thanks to you all for your support, for those of you who are supporting this block grant concept, helping us fend off more and more mandates from the Congress, and those who are with us in the idea that what we need for this economy now is something that will in a laserlike way stimulate an economy that is really ready to move and really ready to recover.

I really do thank you. And I hope this hasn't been too inconvenient, off and on again on the schedule. But I'm off early in the morning. And I just looked forward to having a chance to at least drop in and say hello. So thank you all very, very much.

*Note: The President spoke at 5:12 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to the following officers of the National Conference of State Legislatures: Paul (Bud) Burke, president; Robert Connor, vice president; William Pound, executive director; and Terry C. Anderson, staff chairman.*

## Message on the Observance of St. Patrick's Day

March 12, 1992

It gives me great pleasure to send greetings to all those who are celebrating St. Patrick's Day.

When we reflect on the extraordinary life and lasting influence of St. Patrick, it is easy to understand why the observance of this

day has become a cherished annual tradition, in the Emerald Isle and wherever the sons and daughters of Erin have made their home.

Although St. Patrick originally came to Ireland as a captive of pirates and spent six

years in slavery before his daring escape by sea, he later returned and became one of the greatest figures in the history of the Celtic peoples. The man who once described himself as “the least of all the faithful” bravely made his way back to Ireland to bring Christianity to the island’s inhabitants. Through St. Patrick’s influence, the Celtic people added to their ancient history and culture a new and even richer legacy of spiritual faith and human values.

Today, the Irish heritage is as grand as the many stories and legends that have been inspired by the life of St. Patrick. That is why, on March 17th, we not only remember a beloved saint but also celebrate the many

contributions that Irish Americans have made to this country, through their unique traditions and folklore and through their many accomplishments in civic and political life. These have been evident from the earliest days of our Republic, when nine men of Irish origin joined in signing the Declaration of Independence. This is a fitting time to salute them and all who have followed them in carrying forward the hard work of freedom.

Barbara joins me in wishing all Irish Americans, actual and honorary, a very happy St. Patrick’s Day. God bless you.

GEORGE BUSH

## Statement on Signing the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991

*March 12, 1992*

Today I am signing into law H.R. 2092, the “Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991,” because of my strong and continuing commitment to advancing respect for and protection of human rights throughout the world. The United States must continue its vigorous efforts to bring the practice of torture and other gross abuses of human rights to an end wherever they occur.

I regret that the legislation proposed by the Administration to implement the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has not yet been enacted. This proposed implementing legislation would provide a tougher and more effective response to the problem, putting in place for torturers the same international “extradite or prosecute” regime we have for terrorists. The Senate gave its advice and consent to the Torture Convention on October 27, 1990, but the United States cannot proceed to become a party until the necessary implementing legislation is in place. I again call upon the Congress to take prompt action to approve the Torture Convention implementing legislation.

I note that H.R. 2092 does not help to implement the Torture Convention and does present a number of potential problems about which the Administration has ex-

pressed concern in the past. This legislation concerns acts of torture and extrajudicial killing committed overseas by foreign individuals. With rare exceptions, the victims of these acts will be foreign citizens. There is thus a danger that U.S. courts may become embroiled in difficult and sensitive disputes in other countries, and possibly ill-founded or politically motivated suits, which have nothing to do with the United States and which offer little prospect of successful recovery.

Such potential abuse of this statute undoubtedly would give rise to serious frictions in international relations and would also be a waste of our own limited and already overburdened judicial resources. As I have noted in connection with my own Civil Justice Reform Initiative, there is too much litigation at present even by Americans against Americans. The expansion of litigation by aliens against aliens is a matter that must be approached with prudence and restraint. It is to be hoped that U.S. courts will be able to avoid these dangers by sound construction of the statute and the wise application of relevant legal procedures and principles.

These potential dangers, however, do not concern the fundamental goals that this leg-